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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine whether the study of beginning shorthand would improve the language arts skills of eleventh-grade students. This paper describes the study and lists the findings, which indicated that, for students at the lower and middle achievement levels, beginning shorthand fosters a significant degree of learning in the language arts. The paper then makes recommendations for future research and for the teaching of shorthand and English. Among the educational recommendations are that language arts skills continue to be emphasized in beginning shorthand and that language arts teachers consider adopting the techniques that have proved successful in providing supplemental language arts learning gains for beginning shortand students. (GW)

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THE LEARNING OF LANGUAGE ARTS IN BEGINNING SHORTHAND

A Presentation Prepared for the
Northeast Wisconsin Business Educators
April 9, 1976

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Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine if beginning shorthand could be identified as a course that could be taken for the development and improvement of language arts skills. The language arts skills associated with this study were: capitalization, punctuation, reading comprehension, spelling, vocabulary, and word usage.

Procedures

Eleventh grade senior high school students from eleven Minnesota high schools participated in the study. Students in the experimental group were enrolled in both a beginning shorthand course and an English course. Students in the control group were enrolled in an English course.

Experimental and control group students were administered a pretest at the beginning of the first semester of instruction in September, 1974. A post test was administered in April, 1975. The pretest and post test

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were taken from the California Achievement Test for Language Arts, Forms A & B, 1970 edition (Tiegs and Clark).

Treatment of Data

The test results were analyzed to compare the achievement of students enrolled in both beginning shorthand and an English course with students enrolled in an English course. The data were also analyzed to compare achievement of the two groups when students were categorized into upper, middle, and lower achievement levels on the basis of grade point averages.

Analysis of covariance was used to compare language arts achievement of the experimental and control groups when grade point average and attendance were used as covariates. One-way analysis of covariance was used to analyze the data when control and experimental groups were compared. Two-way analysis of variance was applied to analyze the data for significant differences when the upper, middle, and lower achievement levels of the experimental group and control group were compared.

Conclusions

1. Shorthand students perform significantly better than non-shorthand students in the language arts skills of punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary. The highest degree of significance found when comparing the experimental

and control groups was in the language arts skill of spelling.

2. Shorthand students do not perform significantly better than non-shorthand students in the language arts skills of capitalization, reading comprehension, and word usage. However, post test scores obtained by shorthand students in these language arts skills were slightly superior to post test scores obtained by non-shorthand students. The better scores obtained by the shorthand students might suggest that beginning shorthand does offer a degree of learning in these language arts skills.

3. Shorthand students do not perform significantly better than non-shorthand students in the combined six-part language arts test. There was some learning, however, as revealed by higher post test scores obtained by shorthand students.

4. At the lower achievement level, shorthand students perform significantly better than non-shorthand students in the language arts skills of capitalization, punctuation, reading comprehension, and spelling. Shorthand students at this level also perform better than non-shorthand students in the combined six-part language arts test.

5. At the middle achievement level, shorthand students perform significantly better than non-shorthand students in

all language arts skills included in the study with the exception of word usage. Shorthand students at this level also perform better than non-shorthand students in the combined six-part language arts text.

5. At the upper achievement level, non-shorthand students perform significantly better than shorthand students in the language arts skills of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and word usage. Non-shorthand students at this level also perform better than shorthand students in the combined six-part language arts test.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are made for shorthand and English teachers:

1. that the language arts skills of punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary continue to receive emphasis in beginning shorthand classes.

2. that the authors of shorthand textbooks consider the inclusion of capitalization and reading comprehension exercises for special use of lower and middle ability students enrolled in shorthand courses.

3. that shorthand teachers continue to emphasize the importance of language arts skills in shorthand and that they encourage students to make these skills a part of all homework practice.

4. that shorthand teachers continue to emphasize and encourage attendance in the beginning shorthand course, as it will significantly affect a shorthand student's performance in the language arts.

5. that the daily activities of every beginning shorthand class contain some provision for learning in the language arts.

6. that similar study be conducted in which the experimental group consists of shorthand students beyond the beginning course in shorthand.

7. that similar study be conducted in which the experimental group consists of students studying other shorthand systems.

8. that similar study be conducted in which a longer pretest/post test interval be observed, thereby more fully utilizing the transcription skills developed during the later stages of learning.

9. that similar study be conducted in which post-secondary students are used for experimental and control groups.

10. that similar study be conducted in which a more extensive inclusion is made of language arts skills.

11. that similar study be conducted in which a variable other than grade point average is used for comparison purposes. The non-conformity of grading procedures

used by teachers may limit the usefulness of this variable for further study.

12. that language arts teachers encourage the supplemental learning of language arts in disciplines other than formal English.

13. that language arts teachers evaluate the following techniques and instructional methods that have proven successful in providing supplemental language arts learnings for beginning shorthand students and that these suggestions be considered for adoption in formal English classes:

a. Continuous reinforcement of rules in applying punctuation--Students are provided daily reviews of basic rules of applying commas, paragraphing, and capitalization.

b. Positive and continuous motivation are provided for the students--The teacher provides the stimulus for learning the rule by emphasizing its importance to the students when they transcribe their shorthand notes. The students are provided a specific reason to learn, and they want to learn because they realize how beneficial it will be to them on the job.

c. Language arts emphasis in homework assignments--After the students have been introduced to the various rules for applying punctuation, to word lists for vocabulary, and to spelling families, the homework they have been assigned contains constant reminders of these rules and allows the students an opportunity for additional exposure to the language arts.

d. Colored print to emphasize the language arts skill being emphasized--Throughout the shorthand textbook rules of punctuation, difficult spelling words, and vocabulary builders are accentuated in colored print. The student cannot help but become aware of these "reminders"

as the lesson is being completed, either in the classroom or at home.

e. Inclusion of homework check lists--These lists provide a self-check on the student's devotion to the assignment. This check list, when completed by the student, insures that he has completed all portions of the assignment. The check lists usually pertain to the language arts that are emphasized in a particular lesson.

f. Language arts review on paragraphs that require identical grammatical corrections--In English classes a student is usually given a topic on which to write a theme. In applying the appropriate punctuation, paragraphing, and vocabulary, each student's theme must obviously meet different requirements. The punctuation used in one theme will be different from that which is used in another theme, the vocabulary used by one student will be different from that used by another student, etc. In shorthand classes, students are given identical paragraphs and are asked to punctuate the entire paragraph, provide appropriate vocabulary for missing words, and supply necessary paragraphing and capitalization. When the teacher reviews the work with the students, every student benefits from the discussion because the remarks relate directly to each student's paper. This same technique could be used by students enrolled in English classes.

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